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LABOR TENDENCIES IN GREAT BRITAIN.

BY MICHAEL DAVITT.

EVENTS of much import to the political future of the British working classes have made themselves felt during this month of May. They will have been more or less referred to in the cable chronicles which keep the public of the United States informed of the diurnal history of Europe. Among these events were the publication of the fifth and last report of the committee of the House of Lords on "sweating" in the workshops of Great Britain, chiefly of London; Mr. Gladstone's article in *Lloyd's Newspaper* upon the rights and responsibilities of labor; and the rapid growth of British labor organizations as manifested in the popular demonstrations in Hyde Park and other parts of England on the 4th of the month in support of the eight-hours movement. It is doubtful if even the resourceful press of America can have given to these occurrences the full attention which would be essential to a correct study of their meaning. It has occurred to me, therefore, that it might not be out of place if a subject of such vast importance, not alone to British, but to international, labor interests, were discussed in some detail in the columns of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*. The economic relations between the two great English-speaking parts of the industrial world render it necessary that thinking men and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic should comprehend the full meaning of the movements peculiar to both continents.

The scandalous—the almost inhuman—conditions under which working men and women are being employed in many industries in England have long been the subject of a bitter cry for redress. Public feeling has been appealed to from time to time in recent years to have this matter fully investigated, and in consequence of this agitation a Select Committee of the House of Lords was appointed last year to take evidence. It may possi-

bly excite a smile among your readers to find members of the aristocratic chamber voting themselves a task of this kind. A committee of *gourmands* resolving to investigate the quality of the food served out to the inmates of a poorhouse would about correspond, in the matter of propriety, with a committee of the House of Lords inquiring into the conditions and pay of labor in the workshops of England! However, this is how things are sometimes done in this country. The evidence collected by Lord Dunraven's committee more than confirms the statements that have been made from time to time in the press about the extent and the evils of the "sweating" system. It will hardly be credited by those in America who are not familiar with the conditions of daily toil in many of the English industries to what extent "white slavery" is still prevalent in civilized England. The report of the House of Lords' committee should be carefully read by those in the United States who know to what extent the terms and circumstances of labor in countries commercially related react upon each other's industrial well-being. I can only give a few extracts in this article.

Speaking of the tailoring industry of London, the report says (page 4):

"The conditions under which life is carried on, as described by some witnesses, are deplorable in the extreme. These witnesses have seen people working with the garments on their backs to keep the worker warm; Mr. Monroe knowing of a child with measles being covered by one of these garments. Three or four gas-jets may be flaring in the room, a coke fire burning in the wretched fire-place, sinks untrapped, closets without water, and altogether the sanitary condition abominable. A witness told us that in a double room, perhaps 9 feet by 15 feet, a man, his wife, and six children slept, and in the same room ten men were usually employed, so that at night eighteen persons would be in that one room!"

The wages paid to the unfortunate wretches who are compelled to work under such conditions are particularized as follows (pages 5 and 6):

"The highest rate paid for men's work is 10s. a day. It runs down to 2s. 6d.; women occasionally get 6s. a day, but the average is very low. For a slop coat from 2s. to 3s. 9d. was formerly paid; but the rate now is 1s. 6d. to 2s. 3d. A good coat for which a man got 10s. 2d. a few years ago now brings the maker only 6s. 6d. . . . Mr. Arnold White produced a coat which was made for seven pence halfpenny, and by working fifteen hours a woman could make four such in a day, earning 2s. 6d.; but out of this she had to pay 3d. for getting the buttonholes worked and 4d. for the trimmings."

Continuing, the report goes on to say:

"As regards the men's hours, sometimes they work eighteen, twenty, or even twenty-two hours at a stretch; a witness once worked forty hours, from 6 A. M. on Thursday till 10 P. M. on Friday. A witness went to work the day before appearing

before the committee at 6:30 A. M., and worked until 2:30 A. M. of the following day ; one hour for dinner, no tea time ; worked harder here than in Warsaw, and made less. A witness stated that he got 5s. per diem when at work ; his hours were from 8 A. M. till 11 P. M., and employment very irregular. The Rev. R. C. Billing has seen hands at work at 2 A. M., and has found them again at work at 7 A. M. the same morning."

This state of things does not, of course, prevail in anything like a general rule throughout the tailoring trade of England. It, however, largely obtains in London and other great centres where ready-made clothing is made for exportation. The wearer of a London-made coat in New York may possibly realize the profits of "sweating" on learning that the original cost of his sartorial adornment may have been but fifteen cents!

The report supplies evidence of an almost similar state of things in the "sweating" practices of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Dudley, Shrewsbury, Walsall, Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester, and Leeds tailoring.

Before entering upon the details of sweating in the boot-making trade, as supplied in evidence, the report gives the following description of how the imported Jews and other pauper work-seekers are victimized upon landing in London. Nothing in the recorded doings of the touts who infested the vicinity of Castle Garden can surpass in villanous heartlessness this account of London rascality, given on page 17 of the report :

"People wait for them at the docks, professing to be able to find them employment, but 'they will not do anything for them until they have robbed them of every sixpence they have.' They 'are in a fearful condition,' said another witness; 'some are without money entirely; others have a few groschen, or marks, or thalers, or roubles, just as the case may be, of which they are very soon eased by the loafers and touts and runners that hang about the docks for the purpose of trying to show them lodgings or a place to rest themselves for the night.' 'They almost stand in the market at the East End after arrival,' the Rector of Spitalfields, now Bishop of Bedford, told us, 'in a miserable plight, with hardly any clothes to cover them, and without a penny in their pockets.' 'I have myself,' he continued, 'seen these poor creatures at work up to two o'clock in the morning, and I have found them again at work, the same people and in the same room, at seven in the morning, working to a large extent just for their own maintenance and their own shelter.'"

According to the best-informed witnesses who were examined before the committee, "sweating" is carried on to a greater extent in the boot trade than in any other industry in London. The most destitute of the foreign Jews coming to England are pressed through their wretched condition into the service of the sweaters, and it is computed that no less than 5,000 "greeners," as these inexperienced workmen are called, are now employed in

the boot manufactories of London alone. At page 20 the report supplies this information :

"Some of the masters, it is said, hold their men under a contract for a certain period, and a sum of money is deducted weekly from their wages as a deposit, which they forfeit if they leave the firm or master who has engaged them, and thus are prevented from obtaining higher wages during the busy period of the year when their labor is in most demand."

Summing up the evidence given about the boot trade, the committee trace the "sweating" practices to a variety of causes. They say at pages 21 and 22 :

"It will be seen from the foregoing epitome of the evidence that sweating in the boot trade is mainly traced by the witnesses to the introduction of machinery and a more complete system of sub-division of labor, coupled with immigration from abroad and foreign competition. Some witnesses have traced it in a great measure, if not principally, to the action of factors; some to excessive competition among small masters as well as men; others have accused the trades-unions of a course of action which has defeated the end they have in view, namely, effectual combination, by driving work, owing to their arbitrary conduct, out of the factory into the house of the worker, and of handicapping England in the race with foreign countries by setting their faces against the use of the best machinery. The lack of technical education has also been deplored. Mr. Arnold White and Mr. Miers repudiated the contention that the demand for cheapness is the cause of sweating—a contention which, as regards upholstery, was energetically put forward by Mr. Holland. Mr. Miers, on the contrary, held 'that the sweating system puts before the public the cheap articles, and that it is not the public that particularly calls for them.'"

Going from London to the midland counties, the report deals with the chain- and nail-making industries. The conditions of employment and pay are thus described :

"The business is carried on in this way : the worker receives a certain weight of iron, and he has to return a corresponding weight of chain, less an allowance which is, or ought to be, four pounds in the bundle weighing half a hundredweight, for waste in the working. It is stated that workmen can occasionally save some iron out of the allowance for waste, which they work up on their own account, and sell to 'foggers' (the local name for sweaters) at low rates, to the general detriment of the trade. One of the most common charges, however, brought by the workers is that the necessary weight for waste is not allowed them, and consequently they are unable to return the requisite weight of chain."

Instances are next given of the enormous profits made by middlemen out of the underpaid labor of men and women, and the report proceeds :

"A still more extraordinary case is that mentioned by Mr. Juggins, who stated that cart chains costing, as far as value of labor and material were concerned, three halfpence and 7d. respectively, had been sold in Southport for from 4s. 6d. to 5s., in Liverpool for 5s., and in London for 7s. A male chain-maker stated that he earned 14s. or 15s. a week, working from seven to seven, except on Mondays, when he finished at six and Saturdays at three. A nail-maker said that out of his week's work only

about 8s. 6d. remained for himself, after deducting firing and other charges; 'and I have worked for that amount of money,' he added, 'till I do not know where to put myself.' In another case a husband and wife work together; there are three children, two at school and none at work. The man does the 'heading,' the woman the 'pointing,' of the nails. Their united work brings in from 18s. to £1 a week; out of that about 2s. 3d. for a 'breeze,' about 5s. for carriage, 2s. 6d. for rent of house and shop; schooling of the children, 6d.; 6d. to 9d. for deductions on account of underweight, and the man has to devote half a day to a day to repairing his tools. Eighteen shillings or £1 does not represent their average weekly earnings over a year, as some weeks they do not get any work at all. Their general hours of work were from seven in the morning till nine at night, with half an hour for breakfast, an hour for dinner, and half an hour for tea for the man."

It would be expected, in the natural course of things, that a committee who had laid bare so shocking a state of industrial life in England would have remedies to recommend equal to the evils which their efforts have brought to light and localized. But we search in vain through the pages of their report for any courageous or efficient proposal. The few suggestions that are put forward are not worthy of being called a remedy, while Lord Dunraven and his colleagues dismiss the whole subject in a sermonizing paragraph which truly gauges their capacity for the task imposed upon them.

"We cannot conclude," say their lordships at page 24, "without expressing our earnest hope that the exposure of the evils which have been brought to our notice will induce capitalists to pay closer attention to the conditions under which the labor which supplies them with goods is conducted. When legislation has reached the limit up to which it is effective, the real amelioration of conditions must be due to increased sense of responsibility in the employer and improved habits in the employed. We have reason to think that the present inquiry itself has not been without moral effect. And we believe that public attention and public judgment can effectually check operations in which little regard is shown to the welfare of workpeople and to the quality of production, and can also strongly second the zealous and judicious efforts now being made to encourage thrift, promote temperance, improve dwellings, and raise the tone of living."

This being all which the second chamber of the British Parliament is prepared to recommend for the alleviation of the worst kind of labor evils in the large centres of manufacturing life, it is matter of no surprise to find a rapid spread of socialistic ideas among the toilers of all callings who are taught to rely upon combination and public opinion as the surest means by which effective remedies can be obtained. The House of Commons even, the "popular chamber," as it is called in England, is getting out of touch with the working classes. It was significant that, though there were nearly half a million of London citizens in Hyde Park taking part in the eight-hours demonstration on the fourth of May, there was but one Member of Parliament among the

speakers, and he was a pronounced Socialist. It is not to be inferred from this that socialistic doctrines are converting all English workingmen away from the more conservative ideas of trades-unionism ; but it is one among many signs indicating the progress of principles of social reform which appeal to the minds and the hopes of, at least, the unskilled laborers of Great Britain far more strongly than do the old methods of purely Parliamentary redress. We are, therefore, about to witness in England and Scotland a movement of extra-Parliamentary political action which will seek to combine all workers in something like a federated organization for the vindication of labor rights. It bids fair to discard the questionable aid of both Liberal and Tory politicians, unless the former party advances its position considerably nearer to the programme of the labor movement than it occupies at present.

Mr. Gladstone, always mindful and watchful of the current of popular tendencies, but never willing to turn it in the direction of concrete action until public opinion sets a political value upon the lead which must be taken by some one, has just discussed the labor problem in his usual masterly style. His article in *Lloyd's Newspaper* has, as a matter of course, attracted widespread attention. It is not a pronouncement of policy or an exposition of principle on the labor question so much as a strong, earnest sermon, which is to be read between the lines, of what friendly critics call his pious opinions upon the problem of the hour. While the great Liberal statesman points out the preponderating political power of the working classes in the matter of the franchise, he hopes and prays that such power may never be exercised to the political or other injury of vested interests. He says :

“ Were the domestic relation in which employers once stood to laborers to be inverted, and were laborers once to obtain the uncontrolled hand, then, indeed, while the material condition might be higher, they would be subject to a strain of moral trial such as they never yet have been called upon to undergo, and such as only the strong restraints of the Gospel could (in my judgment) enable them successfully to encounter. But such a contingency, though it may be possible, is indefinitely remote. It is most unlikely to arise ; and the experience of the United States, which has gone the nearest to trying the question, witnesses to that unlikelihood ; for there public right has been developed to the uttermost by public law and by the tone of manners.”

Mr. Gladstone with his usual prophetic ken must see clearly, notwithstanding the illustration here given, that political power and supremacy will come into the hands of the working classes of Great

Britain under totally different conditions to those which he has referred to in the analogy of America. Here government has been and still is carried on by capitalism and aristocracy, to the exclusion of all democratic participation ; whereas in the United States the principle of democracy has always guided the destinies of the Republic. The conflict which must take place between the power of the people and the dying influence of the aristocracy for supremacy in the government of the British Empire will have results which Mr. Gladstone foresees as clearly as any man alive, but which he is anxious to disguise from the observation of the present by the expression of pious hopes that this conflict may be indefinitely, if not entirely, postponed.

A consideration of some facts relating to the growing power of labor organization in Great Britain will show that such a conflict is sooner or later inevitable, and may be precipitated by any untoward event.

The most powerful and the best-organized body among the British workers is the coal-miners' organization. It is computed that there are at least 500,000 men employed in the mines of England, Scotland, and Wales ; 300,000 of these are organized. Each coal district has its local organization, while most of these local bodies are united in one federated combination.

There are five members directly representing the miners' organizations in Parliament, to whom salaries are paid averaging \$1,700 a year. These are Thomas Burt, M. P., for the Morpeth division of Northumberland ; Charles Fenwick, M. P., for the Wandsbeck division of the same county ; William Crawford, M. P., for Mid-Durham ; Benjamin Pickard, M. P., for the Norman-ton division of Yorkshire, and William Abraham, M. P., for the Rhondda Valley, in Wales.

These Parliamentary representatives of the miners of Great Britain are men of more than average ability, both as public speakers and organizers of men. They are of irreproachable public character and command considerable influence in the House of Commons. They are not advocates of advanced theories of social reform, and are considered, in many respects, far too conservative by the more radical element in the rank and file of the great miners' organizations.

The miners of the county of Durham are accounted to be the best equipped in funds of all the separate miners' organizations.

They have accumulated a large amount of capital and have been able to exercise so much power and political influence in Durham as to compel the mine-owners to concede to them practically all they have demanded. Their hours of daily labor are seven from "bank to bank." Their wages average about eleven dollars a week, but they only work eleven days in the fortnight. The hours of labor and wages vary in other counties, Durham being more favored than other districts in this respect. In Staffordshire the hours of daily toil are between ten and eleven, but in this midland county the miners are badly organized; which accounts for their backward position in the matter of pay and hours of labor. In Derbyshire a similar condition of things prevails, while Yorkshire, on the other hand, approximates more to the state of pay and work which obtains in Durham. In Scotland the miners work, on the average, nine and a half hours per diem. Lanarkshire is the chief mining county of Scotland. Until recently organization was very backward among the Lanark miners, who are even still far from being as well paid, or as well able to take care of themselves in other respects, as the Durham miners.

The immense power wielded by these mining bodies was significantly illustrated a few weeks ago, when a united demand on the part of the miners of England was made for an advance of 10 per cent. in their wages. It was believed for a time that the mine-owners, who have been compelled in recent years to grant many concessions of a similar kind, would refuse to have this latest demand added to the number. Pending the notice given by the miners' representatives, the public were apprehensive of a fuel famine as the result of the contest between employers and employed. However, on the expiration of the time embraced in the miners' notice, the 10 per cent. increase of wages was granted, and another triumph was added to the long list of victories which organization has won for the most deserving section of the workers of Great Britain.

It is impossible to say what the organized miners of Great Britain may not be able to obtain for themselves and their cause if they continue to press their full demands upon the consideration of the capitalist owners of British mines. England without her coal would be like Samson without his locks,—weak and powerless, commercially as well as politically. And should a leader arise from among the mining population of Great Britain who

would resolve upon striking a deadly blow at landlordism in mines, in order to win for coal-miners the value of the full output of their daily work as their daily wage, he could practically paralyze for a time the whole industrial life of Great Britain if his demands were not conceded. Whether or not such a contingency will occur is a somewhat hazardous subject to speculate upon; but if we are to judge of the probabilities of the near future by the growing power, intelligence, and political influence of labor organizations all over these three countries at the present time, such an event as that hinted at may possibly be embraced among the means which workingmen may be driven to resort to in order to enforce their claims to a just remuneration for the risk and toil of their daily labor.

There is no need in an article of this kind to dwell at any length upon the trades-unions of Great Britain. They have achieved a world-wide reputation by the steady and progressive improvement which they have effected in the conditions of the work and pay of their members. Moreover, the history of these bodies is sufficiently well known already in the United States. Several of their leaders have visited America from time to time, and have explained in speeches or through the press the character and scope and the ultimate objects of their organizations. Here in England the trades-unions are now considered to be too conservative in their policy. Trades-union leaders are referred to frequently by the leaders of the unskilled working classes as "the aristocrats of labor." Mr. Henry Broadhurst, M. P., the recognized head of English trades-unionism, is frequently singled out for attack by John Burns and Tom Mann, who are the most typical men among the daily-increasing number of labor agitators in England. Mr. Broadhurst was Under-Secretary of State in the Liberal government in 1886, and it is said against him by his more advanced followers that he is more of a thick-and-thin supporter of the Liberal party than a leader of English workingmen.

It is certain that we shall witness a severe struggle in the near future between the new labor leaders and the old. John Burns is coming rapidly to the front as a prominent leader of the new labor forces. He is a man of striking individuality and great force of character. He has succeeded in giving himself a good education, and is in every way qualified to act well the part which public opinion assigns to him in the present movement. The signal success

which he, in conjunction with Tom Mann, achieved in the great dock-laborers' strike of London, the admirable tact and judgment which distinguished his action in counselling, directing, and restraining 30,000 or 40,000 workmen who had never before been disciplined into any united effort, have won for him a world-wide reputation. He commands the full confidence of a very large section of the labor population of London, from having labored for years among their poorest working classes before his efforts on their behalf were recognized by the approbation of the general public. He is one of the most efficient members of the London County Council, and is at present a candidate for the representation of the borough of Battersea in the Imperial Parliament. Many of the best judges of public men are predicting a big future for Burns. It remains, however, to be seen whether a successful labor agitator can also become a successful politician. Burns is a good and forcible speaker, is well informed upon most topics of current interest, and, like most other labor leaders of these countries, is a total abstainer.

Burns's programme is not easily defined. He started out, in company with Mr. Hyndman, of the Social Democratic Federation, as a revolutionary Social Democrat, favoring the nationalization of the machinery of production as well as of the land. In those days he inclined to the means of revolutionary effort rather than the methods of constitutional action ; but since his achievements in the dock strike have brought him more prominently before the public as a more or less responsible leader, he has modified his programme and has wisely discarded all appeals to physical revolution. This rational change of policy has strengthened his position with the public opinion of London. It is folly to preach an appeal to the sword for the redress of labor rights in a country where the working classes can, if they choose to organize themselves for the purpose, effect a constitutional revolution by means of the ballot-box. As Mr. Gladstone has said in the article to which I have already referred, "The ultimate power resides in the hands of those who constitute our Democracy," and all that remains for whoever shall step into the position of a national leader of the working classes of Great Britain to do is to organize the laboring masses so as to force Parliament, by the legitimate pressure of combination and public opinion, to carry out the mandate of the people who elect the House of Commons.

In the probable achievement of this constitutional revolution the Irish movement will continue to work on parallel lines with the labor movements of Great Britain. The Land League was more democratic in its principles and aims than English popular movements of the past have been. For it is an anomaly, as Mr. Gladstone points out, that, while political power now practically rests with the working classes in Great Britain, yet its institutions are decidedly anti-democratic. As the great Liberal leader further remarks, "Their basis is popular, but upon that basis is built a hierarchy of classes and of establishments savoring in part of feudal times and principles." Mr. Gladstone, however, is reasoning from the analogy of the recent past, and not from the manifest indications of the present. English popular opinion has been greatly influenced by the principles and teachings of the Land League propaganda of the past few years. And as Ireland has largely received the democratic impulse from her close and constant relations with America, the reaction of the Irish movement upon the English one is infusing the ideas of American democracy among the masses of the British people. We shall therefore witness, in the growing great labor movement of the near future, the cause of social reform running in democratic grooves toward the attainment of its ends. English institutions will undoubtedly become revolutionized as a result of the present uprising of the working classes for higher pay and better conditions of social existence.

A mighty organization is rapidly forming itself in the seaport towns of the three countries. It is partly the result of the successful dock-laborers' strike of London. In London it is called the Dock-Laborers' Union, and has Tom Mann as president. In other large ports it is known as the National Union of Dock-Laborers, with a headquarters in Glasgow. These two bodies number already close upon one hundred thousand members. Wherever the National Union has its branches established, so as to embrace all the dock-laborers of the place in its membership, it practically dictates the rate of pay and the conditions of labor. During the last three months remarkable evidence of its widespread power has been frequently given. A shipping line refusing to grant the demands of the union, say in Glasgow, would have a "boycott" declared against the unloading of a vessel belonging to it in another port; and instances have frequently

occurred where a ship of a boycotted line had to go from port to port of the three countries in hopeless efforts to have its cargo discharged.

The influence of this dock-laborers' organization may possibly extend even beyond the shores of Great Britain and Ireland. The close commercial and mercantile relations between America and these islands suggest the possibility of a "boycott" in Liverpool being extended to New York. During the recent dock-laborers' strike in Liverpool it was more than once hinted by the leaders that, if the struggle were prolonged on the part of the ship-owners, the quay-laborers of Liverpool might be driven to ask the men employed in similar labor in New York to boycott the ships of the great trans-Atlantic lines owned by such companies as were most determined in opposition to the Liverpool dockers' demands. How far international coöperation of this kind may be resorted to, or be made possible, by the growing feeling of international brotherhood among the workers of the world, is perhaps for the present too much a mere speculation. If, however, we are to judge of the growth of responsive friendly feeling among American workingmen towards the working classes in England by the establishment in Great Britain and Ireland of branches of a great American labor organization, the possibility I speak of may be, and probably is, near. Assemblies of the Knights of Labor are increasing day by day in these islands; which means, presumably, that the workingmen enrolled in such branches can be more or less influenced in their strike policies by the orders of General Master-Workman Powderly. We can only picture, on the other hand, the National Union of Dock-Laborers of Great Britain forming its branches in New York and other ports on the Atlantic seaboard, to recognize the conditions which would enable the leaders of the dockers on this side of the Atlantic to give effect to their policy even in the United States.

The next of the three great British combinations of workers which is deserving of mention here is the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. Its membership extends to the railways of the three countries. The strike which occurred in Ireland lately, and which during seven days practically paralyzed the entire freight traffic of the south of Ireland, was controlled by an English organization. The employees declared the strike, but an official of this body was elected to the leadership, and he provided

the necessary funds. It was demonstrated in this brief struggle between railway directors and their employees that it is in the power of this single organization to suspend the traffic of the entire railway system of Great Britain and Ireland when the members deem it necessary to do so in furtherance of their interests or claims. This is a fact of portentous importance, not only to railway shareholders, but to the entire capitalistic interests of Great Britain and Ireland as well. It is calculated to materially affect the value of the railway stock of these islands. We shall probably see commercial interests, apart from those of railways, showing a selfish partiality for the cause of the railway employees in future. The latter will have their demands backed up by those whose inclinations would otherwise prompt them to support railway directors, but whose fears of the ultimate consequences of a prolonged strike upon the general trade and commerce of the country will induce them to extend a diplomatic sympathy to the cause of the railway workers.

This brief outline of the wide-reaching influence of three great English organizations will enable those who closely study Mr. Gladstone's recent article to understand why he lays such emphatic stress upon the "responsibilities of labor." We have but to imagine such concerted action between coal-miners, dock-laborers, and railway employees as would enable them, in the enforcement of some demand, to bring the whole manufacturing and transport machinery of Great Britain to a deadlock, to realize the danger which may threaten the interests of British capital at home in the near future. There is as yet no national or federated labor movement in Great Britain. The cause of labor is being fought in independent detachments; one class of workers striking in one part of the country for better pay, while another class, elsewhere, is demanding shorter hours of labor. There is, however, a drawing-together, a tendency to fusion of effort, on the part of the various laboring combinations throughout the country. This is a most hopeful sign of the times. Hitherto there has been little or no coöperation between one class of workers and another, excepting among miners, in the struggle for labor rights. The jealousies that seem inseparable from popular action in a country divided by class distinctions have operated to the injury of the labor cause in general. But here, again, we have to recognize the beneficial influence and teaching

of the Irish agitation of the past ten years. In this movement we succeeded practically in combining in one body the various labor interests of Ireland, as an example and a lesson to the cause of our fellow-workers of Great Britain. The solidarity of the Irish movement is powerfully influencing the cohesive action of British labor organizations, and we shall see in a comparatively short time a federation of the labor bodies of Great Britain working out the solution of the problem of British labor as the Land League has worked out that of the Irish land.

The future of the Liberal party will be vitally influenced by the attitude which its responsible leaders must soon take up towards the labor movement. The working classes, as a rule, have hitherto been firm supporters of Mr. Gladstone. They have had many measures of reform passed for them by his successful effort to extend the popular liberties of Englishmen. This is gratefully recognized, and the "G. O. M." is still first favorite among English statesmen with the British toilers. But the allegiance of the workingmen to the Liberal party is bound by no sacred concordat. English, like other workers, are imbibing new ideas of social reform every day, which beget new demands for legislative action for the benefit of the wealth-producers. They have advanced far beyond the party programme of the Liberals, which counts among its leading supporters a good many landlords and a large number of capitalists. The election funds of Mr. Gladstone's party are largely subscribed to by his rich adherents. He is, consequently, bound more or less to interests which act as a restraint upon the progress of his following towards a pronounced radical policy. He has already lost his wealthiest supporters in the home-rule plunge of 1886, and he is naturally anxious to avert the secession of those who still remain by avoiding another new departure.

But while it is impossible not to sympathize with the veteran statesman in this dilemma, he, or, after him, his successor, must either place himself at the head of the labor cohorts now organizing themselves in the struggle for political supremacy in these islands, or "the masses" will create a new party which will shatter the fortunes of the Liberal cause. This latter is the consummation for which the Tories devoutly wish. They are calculating confidently upon a widening breach between the industrial

classes and the Liberal party, securing a return to office of the present government at the next general election. The party tactics of Mr. Gladstone's opponents are adapted to that end. Protection is being dangled in the guise of "fair trade" before workmen as a panacea for low wages and the other evils of labor competition. Many Tories are even affecting to lean toward state socialism, while it is not improbable that, in the pursuit of this policy, money may be advanced from Tory sources at the next general election with which to run bogus socialist against Liberal candidates.

All this may be discreditable to Tory tactics; but it ought to act as a warning to Liberal statesmen. The working classes have hitherto looked upon the Liberal party as that to which their political affinities naturally attached them. Their votes are now the chief support of that party at elections. Without such support neither Mr. Gladstone nor home rule would stand a ghost of a chance when the next appeal is made to the electorate of Great Britain. Clearly, therefore, it is alike the duty and the interest of the Liberal leaders to advance the lines of their programme so as to embrace the reasonable demands of the labor platform; and if this common-sense step is taken in time, the labor movement and the Liberal cause will run upon parallel lines, in active, sympathetic coöperation, insuring the near achievement of those reforms for which educated workmen are so earnestly striving, and making the triumph of home rule a political certainty at the next general election.

The cause of labor must be represented in Parliament by a greater number of workmen than it has there at present. Nine members out of a Parliament of six hundred and seventy are all it possesses now. It lies with the Liberal party to make that nine at least thirty when the next Parliament is elected, and to have state payment of members adopted as a prominent plank in the Liberal programme. To which should be added the municipalization of the land; the abolition of the "breakfast-table duties"; free education for the children of the laboring classes; eight hours as the limit of daily labor in government and municipal employments; better and more sanitary dwellings for the poor; and the rigorous enforcement of the factory acts with respect to the workshops and sweating-dens of the country. A platform with such planks as these would remove all danger of collision at the

electoral polls between labor and Liberal candidates. Such a programme would not comprise all the demands that are now being put forward by the labor leaders, it is true ; but it would convince those who "toil and spin" that the Liberal party were resolved to be in touch with them and to make their cause the paramount interest of Parliamentary effort. It would completely counteract the tactics of party disintegration which are now pursued by the Tories, and would secure a *modus vivendi* between the cause of labor and the cause of Liberalism, until the extension of the franchise to universal adult suffrage and the matured results of popular education shall transform the once great Liberal party of England into a party of Industrial Democracy, in whose hands the future destinies of the British Empire will lie for the final mission of good or evil which will remain for it to fulfil in the universal movement for a better and nobler order of civilization among mankind.

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